

The Swan Song

January/February 2001

Edition 3

A Buckingham's Retinue Publication©

It's the end of another season, and with the dawn of the next fast approaching already preparation has been undertaken by various members to get ready. After a succession of parties over Christmas, with usual merrymaking, most members have now been reported as saying their capacity for drink will not be diminished in any way come next season. As I get more to grips with the realities of attempting to produce a newsletter (around all the partying) I hope to gradually be able to improve it with time. I have thus decided that in order to make it more regular, and to force me to keep writing, the Swan Song is to be bi-monthly. So the next issue is to be due out around the start of March. For anyone who did not receive a copy of the last one please contact me and I will happily arrange one. Contributions this time have come in from Catherine Wetton; Dave Hemsley all the way from Australia, who also was kind enough to also draw the pictures; Darren Brown and Chris Howell; all other work has been included by myself to fill up the white spaces.

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Warwick Castle – 26th to 28th August

What would we do without this event to help round off the end of the high season. It's everyone's chance to show off, let other people know what a diverse and talented group we are, whilst at the same time get our arses kicked. For those of you who've not been, the event is based on the Lammas Festival or Festival of Bread.

This seems to involve the different Households in attendance playing a number of games throughout the day. Some of the more notable are the infamous Tug of War, for which the Clarence women have an unbeaten record. Even against some men's teams! Then there is the Arse Kicking, which is perhaps self-explanatory. This year I was fortunate enough to avoid this punishment until the last day,

where I was unlucky enough to have someone put their foot in the wrong place. The Doctor has reassured me I can still have children, but only if I give this sport up now, sorry guys. Meanwhile Mistress Mather was able to come out on top in the Hat Fencing competition, giving us some much needed points. Our secret weapon of the weekend had to be Master Brown, showing his natural ability with the bow and winning the archery competition on successive days.

The climax of each day is the Battle of the Flags, where each team has to fight to win the flag from the opposing side. Once that has been achieved the side with both flags is automatically the winner. With some expert fighting and keen tactics a good account was given, despite harsh conditions. Fortunately the event is not the blood bath of yester year. Though Master Bravey, our only casualty, fought on heroically the next day after receiving a bad hit to the knee. Master Harley was also thankful for being advised to wear a mail skirt, thus still allowing himself the option of future propagation.

After a hard days battling, members gave themselves the evening off. Whereby the local hostelry kindly provided us with ample quantities of alcohol and free food! Warwick is always a fun event and this time was no exception. Although I did have nightmares thanks to the thunderstorms in the evening, in which I'd wake and find the camp floating off down the river. The Island there would never flood though, would it?

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Could anyone with any contributions please send them to the address above, the next issue will hopefully be ready sometime after the Feast for March.

Dartmouth - 19th to 23rd August

Tired, fed-up and aching from a long car journey Bucks Retinue arrived at Dartmouth Castle only to find that an appearance in town had to be put in before fully unloading! Kit was duly dragged out of the cars and van, corsets and doublets laced and members piled back into the cars and headed down to the town. One drill display and lots of drumming later, we were entertained by the Royal Castle hotel, where they laid on a slab of lager, a slab of bitter and copious sandwiches. The only drawback was the magnificent view, which most people had of us, as we ate outside on the pavement (and the glass in my cheese and pickle sandwich – but at least it was food!).

Several shabbily dressed Tudor soldiers snuck into the vehicles, after first making off with the remains of the alcohol and returned to make camp. English Heritage had the courtesy to provide us with exclusive accommodation, being a fifteenth century gun tower overlooking the estuary and back in towards Dartmouth – a fine commanding view of the river and fantastic cliffs that gave a brilliant echo from the cannon! For those no small few with an interest, a WWII torpedo shed and Kingsmere Castle could be seen on the other side of the Estuary. Which appeared to have a target rather conveniently painted on the side! (Well it looked like, one but could have been a life belt. Though this was dismissed as less likely.)

Now there isn't really a lot of room at Dartmouth. Due to erosion the small bay next door is inaccessible and as it is on a cliff the amount of camping space is equal to that of a small campaign tent. This meant sleeping in the gun tower itself, three floors of re-enactors and dogs, bliss! Enough room for everyone, even the snores! We were spoilt rotten as the custodian, Terry, had arranged for us to be fed by the adjacent café every morning at breakfast, which only left lunch and the occasional evening meal to be sorted by us. Being Regatta week, our tour guide (Terry), had arranged some evening activities for our delight. Our efforts being rewarded in food and beer! Followed by some impromptu bill-work along the pavements, in the dark, on the way back to the castle.

The plot for Dartmouth was as follows. It's 15** and there's a small group of local men

manning the castle for Good King Henry VIII. Sir Edward Tyndall (Andy) makes a surprise visit to the garrison with his wife (guess who!), who incidentally isn't overly impressed to be there as she'd rather be at court. There are also a few women at the castle, two are soldiers' wives, the others are a local widow who comes and helps with the washing and mending, and her cousin who's visiting. Oh, and a couple of Landsknechts. (Although I'm certain this was just an excuse for Allan and Chris to dress in flash kit). Things went well with displays and talks both inside and out of the Gun tower. That was until the first floor started to give way!

The first floor was constructed the old fashioned way with three large sturdy main beams, with smaller ones attached, which rested in niches cut into the main beams. The floorboards were then fixed to these smaller beams. Under Chris and Kathryn's Oak bed there was a joint in the main beam. This was flush when we got there on the Saturday (Sam, Andy, Allan, myself and Rufus were sleeping on the ground floor so we had ample knowledge of this joint – and I'm not commenting on why we had all been looking at the ceiling!). Sunday and Monday saw a lot of dust as the public crowded up there to listen to Allan's 'arms and armour' talk. To the extent that Sam, Hils and I could be found sat at the edge of the room as far away from this joint as possible. However on the Tuesday the pieces were becoming a lot more like lumps than dust! At this point we noticed that the joint was no longer flush – in fact it had moved by a couple of inches! Chris still insists it was because of Allan's ego hiding under his bed and nothing to do with the combined weight of the bed etc.

Being in Devon a West Country accent became obligatory. Returning from its earlier appearance at the cannon building sessions. Hill started it by going all local, what with being an Exeter girl and all, and it is very catching. By the end of Sunday Kathryn was threatening to punch the next person that called her "Moiy Luvver" and couldn't stay near to Hill and myself for giggling at us! But even she succumbed by the end of the week!

Highlights of the week

- Eating hot treacle tart with local clotted cream while watching 3 wild bottle-nosed dolphins swimming in the estuary and playing with the boats.
- The echo of the cannon of the opposite cliff – the boom was excellent.
- Family's coming two days in a row because their kids loved us so much.
- Free alcohol.
- Watching Chris and Kathryn trying to get Scarf to go upstairs. He was not a happy dog as the stairs were only wooden steps and he could see through them. They tried dragging and carrying initially, the final night in the tower they resorted to covering the stairs with blankets. A very cautious and worried looking Alsatian gingerly climbed these, while Jess and Rufus showed off by running up and down. A round of applause awarded Scarfy when he reached the top. Thankfully for him, we were moved into the Napoleonic gun battery the next night due to the floor.
- The view from the roof of the gun tower, especially at night. Not only did Dartmouth look very pretty, but also the night sky was astounding. It was so clear even the Milky Way could be seen. Hadfield saw a shooting star and Will saw a satellite.
- Copious amounts of tea and coffee, ice cream and cake provided by the café.
- Close runner up for top highlight of the event goes to Terry, the custodian. It was agreed by the whole group that never in our combined years of re-enactment and Living History have we found a custodian that was helpful, kind and general all round nice guy like Terry. He even came up to make us breakfast! He entered into the group banter, giving as good as he got, especially as we teased him about how many times he could change his clothes in one day! On the final day, to give him yet another chance to change, we awarded his generosity with a Bucks Ret T-shirt.
- First prize goes to Andy, Hill, Keith, Jo and Darren. Sat up at the car park, which seems to be a bit of a lover's lane at night, they spent the evening shouting "Git Orf Moiy Karr Park!" at any approaching vehicle. This included a Police Car!

Catherine Wetton

Blore Heath – 23rd & 24th September

This was the first time the group had attended since 1994, the event is now held annually in some fields on a farm, located on the original battlefield. On arrival we were informed that the Yorkist camp was at the top of the hill above the designated battle arena, on closer inspection what they meant was approximately five tents were the Yorkist camp. Thankfully our numbers swelled this and as more and more people arrived a large succour of tents were pitched. Thanks to the efforts of Master Cuthbert in recruiting a large number of new volunteers, and many other newcomers, we thought it only fitting to demonstrate how to behave appropriately in the evening. Hence we all went drinking in the farm barns, singing traditional Stafford songs and preparing the way for the next day's battle.

The next day dawned to beautiful weather and the quiet peace of life in the countryside, until our valiant Captain and drummer awoke! A ritual drill session resulted in some difficulties when everyone was asked to number off, reaching the grand total of 23. Which included one shapely young lad called Bob! With a little training our new recruits were certified fit to wield a bill, providing we weren't standing at the other end. The battle

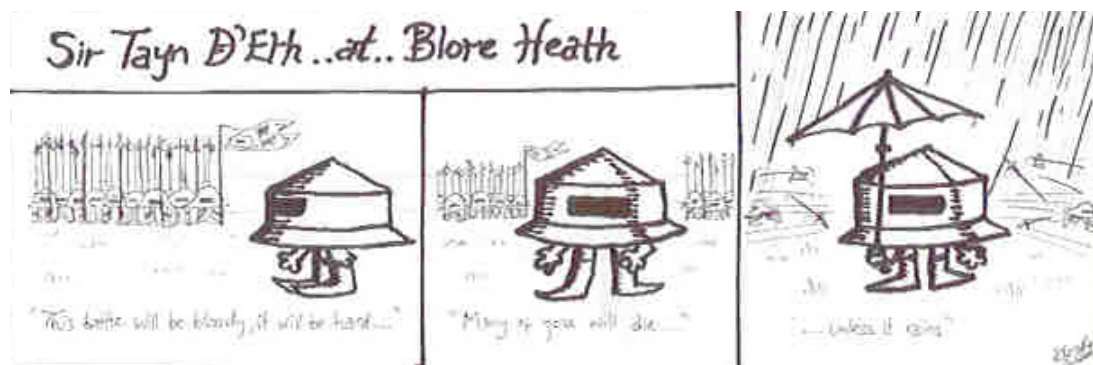
began with us being moved left and right repeatedly till we got into position. Good job the marshals knew what was going on! After much effort the Yorkists had the day and we creamed everyone who came against us. Strange, as Buckingham was in the Midlands at the time commanding a Lancastrian force, so we had to pretend to be badly disguised men of Salisbury.



Thanks to a our hosts providing a rather 'interesting' band for the evenings entertainment, much drinking and dancing took place. Naturally one or too, imbibing more than they could handle, eventually

managed to find their way back to the camp. If not quite managing to find their own sleeping bag! The next day saw the weather turn for the worst and it was decided that it wasn't worth the risk of going out for the fight, it also seemed just too much like tempting an injury. So instead everyone sat inside the tents, talking and completely ignoring any public that were stupid enough to come along. It did slacken off for a while allowing us to watch the valiant few fight on, though the tents went home wet yet again.

This was the largest attendance that Buckingham's Retinue has ever had at a single event, numbering a staggering 38 people in total. Much thanks to all the those who have been busy recruiting and organising events this last year, may we do even better in the future!



'This battle will be bloody, it will be hard' 'many of you will die...' '...Unless it rains'

Fyndyngs and Dyscoverys (Down Under)

"Write something", young, but-not-youngest Master Howell urged, "and send it in before the bank holiday". A tall order, thought I, since I've done no more than three hours' work since leaving those hallowed shores nearly five months ago. I've seen so many amazing sights and met so many interesting people that sorting out that which would be of interest is a titanic struggle. Nevertheless, in the spirit of the old "Fyndyngs and Dyscoverys", I have a slice of slightly more modern Australian history for you.

As Australia was invaded by Europeans only in the last 200 plus years, it has a distinct dearth of mediaeval-era history recognisable as such. What can you write about in a country that never invented a trebuchet, or yet had need of one? In any case, Aboriginal culture seems to have been largely unchanged for around 40,000 years. It took invading white men to alert them to such important modern essentials as guns, fences and certificates of legal ownership!

It didn't take the white men (yes, mainly us, the English) long to come to the conclusion that the new land, Australia, was unpopulated in so far as the natives did not have fences, a feudal system or a written language, and this led them, logically, to the inescapable

conclusion that they were primitive (well, they had no recognizable system of self-government, even ignoring the lack of fences) and would soon, therefore, die out. Australia was thus declared *Terra Nullius* (literally, "land belonging to no-one") and the land opened up to settlers from Europe.

Over thousands of years the Aboriginals had developed and practised a very successful ecologically based social system. Living in a fragile environment, they had realised the benefits to themselves in keeping their food gathering within renewable limits (for instance, never hunting certain animals within the breeding season) long before such things occurred to the rest of the ecologically rapacious "civilized world". They looked after the land and the land, in its turn, sustained them. In to this finely-tuning symbiotic relationship arrived the European farmers with their fences, which denied Aboriginals access to ancient hunting grounds, and sheep and cows, whose hard hooves destroyed the fragile soils and native plants and who fouled vital waterholes. Is it any wonder that the Aboriginals began to fight back?

But a lot of this is missing from contemporary Australian popular history. Until recently history ignored many major

confrontations and massacres involving white soldiers, the police and a body called the Native Police. The last-named was a force made up of Aboriginals from one tribe led by white commanders who were apparently only too happy to kill Aboriginals from other tribes. In English colonial history, this idea of recruiting a force from the locals is not a new idea and has been used to do the colonial power's dirty work on many occasions.

Only now, however, in the spirit of reconciliation, are the true facts being more widely told. There is a long road ahead before all Australians can live comfortably together. You can judge how much work remains to be done when still the PM, John Howard, refuses to say "sorry", even following the recent mass march across Sydney Harbour Bridge, attended by thousands. There have been many times in the last month, as I learn more, when I have frankly been embarrassed to be English. Colonial history is great when you are safely

separated by hundreds of years and thousands of miles, but to see its results walking the streets or drinking in parks is a different emotional trip altogether.

Hum, I seem to have written a rather long short introduction, so I'm forced to truncate this about here... I will write in a future issue (assuming the editors don't summarily dismiss me here and now) about some of the Aboriginal heroes who began to fight back. I will tell you about such men as Windradyne, who was the cause of a declaration of martial law on 14th August 1824 after a successful guerrilla warfare campaign; the Kalkadoons and their heroic last stand at Battle Mountain, Kajabbi in 1884, where they advanced in perfect line into a hail of bullets; and Jandamarra, who, at the reported age of 18, led an ambush on police at Windjana Gorge in 1894 and survived close pursuit to lead raids for another two years.

The Pilgrim

Hair Styles in the Fifteenth Century

Taken from the book "Fashions in Hair, the first Five Thousand Years" by Richard Corson (Published by Peter Owen, London)

This book was a complete 'find' in the local library while looking for information on the ever-increasing topic of hats. It occurred that although we have often talked about the various millenaries available, the most we have ever talked about hair is the usual 'cover it up or you're a wanton woman'!

Richard Corson, the author, has really done his research, the list of sources precluding the index is rather large. Covering 5000 years has obviously meant that he can only say a brief amount from each period. Having said that the entire book itself is fascinating. It shows, as in most fashion trends, history repeats itself. For example, the modern 1970's pageboy cut, which many children suffered, including myself, has strong echoes of the haircuts sported by English men of fashion in the fifteenth century. It's amazing how popular the bob was! It was also interesting that facial hair was also included in the text... I'm sorry, boys, but goatee beards are out! Read on to find out why.

Staying on the subject of beards, there is an interesting piece from the reign of Henry VI. History has popularised him as a religious mad

man, and the following, with our twenty-first century minds, seems to well substantiate this.

An act was passed in 1447, during the reign of Henry VI which stated that;

"No manner of man that will be taken for an Englishman shall have no beard above his mouth; that is to say that he have no hairs on his upper lip so that the said lip be once at least shaven every fortnight or for equal growth with the nether lip; and if any man be found among the English contrary hereunto, that it shall be lawful to every man to take them and their goods as Irish enemies"

Does this mean that all you men with moustaches should now be deemed Irish and the clean-shaven amongst us could confiscate your belongings? We could have a lot of fun with this one!

During the reign of Edward IV an act was passed, again targeting the Irish (history doesn't seem to like them over much does it!). They were required to "wear beards after the English manner. In other words, although a slight beard was permitted on the chin, most English men were clean-shaven.

However, fashion, as always, can go from one extreme to the other. Reynolds (if anyone can tell me who this person is I would be most grateful) reports occasionally false beards were worn. Imagine if you will, France, the date is 1476. Reports have reached us that the Duke of Lorraine has attended Duke Charles of Burgundy's funeral wearing a golden waist length false beard!

Looking at an overview of the fashion in hair over time, it is possible to see how the popularity of long hair and wigs in the seventeenth century. The short bowl cut popular during the reign of Henry V lasted only until the reign of Henry VI, who wore hair medium lengths. Edward IV and Richard III wore almost shoulder length bobs. Henry VII wore his hair longer again. Long hair was popular in France for nearly the whole century due to copying Louis XI. In these cases of different length bob's, the ends were generally curled under.

However, this doesn't mean that shaved heads weren't popular. In 1461, it is reputed that when illness forced Phillip of Burgundy to shave his head, 500 nobles followed suit. So the shorthaired gentlemen in our society can rest easy.

There is one haircut though, that since discovering has to be mentioned. Influenced by the Fashions in Florence, this style was seen from Italy to London and was very popular. In Italy it was known as the Zazzera. The spelling of this word may give you a clue to the style. Known as the Florentine cut in this country, it was a simple shoulder length bob frizzed all over. Backcombing rules!

Wigs sometimes worn by men of fashion as well as false beards. Popular hair colours were black and blonde, the hair being either dyed or bleached. Red however, was not popular. Seems being Ginger was just as unpopular then.

The general rule for young unmarried women and girls was for long flowing hair. After marriage a linen cap or coif covered up the hair. A number of different styles were available on the continent. The hair was often multi-braided or roped (long lengths of straight hair bound separately). These were then wound round the head or hair. Often ribbons,

jewels, or strands of pearls would be sewn in. The bound up hair, also sometimes caught up into nets, was a legacy from the previous centuries fashion. During the first half of the century, especially during the popularity of the horned and heart-shaped headdresses, hairpieces were often used. Along with braids, ropes and nets. These hairpieces were sometimes made from silk floss, if you could afford it, of course.

Centre partings were de-rigor, which tended to make things easier for braiding, which was extensive. (Ever tried plaiting hair with a side parting? Makes bunches impossible!). This carried on into the next century where hairlines became visible once more and the centre parting was still very popular. Therefore, ladies, I am afraid that fringes (Or "bangs" if you ever wondered what the Americans were talking about) are a fashion no-no.

As previously mentioned, hair was normally covered up in this country. To enhance their looks and follow fashion, women plucked their hair back from the hairline high into the hair giving themselves a high forehead. Can you imagine what those women would have given for natural balding! Talking of plucking, every fashionable woman had thin arched brows, so tweezers were a must, and they were not afraid to tweak in public! It was not seemly for any hair other than refined eyebrows to show from underneath the hennin or hood. So for all you fashion conscious 15th century girls out there, a small hand mirror and tweezers in your pouch are essential, but unless you have a naturally high forehead I think plucking the hairline in the name of authenticity is taking things a little too far.

So there you have it, those moustached gentlemen among you can now be deemed Irish and the infamous re-enactors fringe is definitely a female re-enactor problem, (the only cure for which I have found thus far is to grow it out!). A shaved head is okay, as are plucked eyebrows, which I am sure is quite a relief to some of you. What I would really love to see, however, is a man dedicated enough to go for either the Florentine cut or the fashionable fifteenth century beard, or maybe both? Or even a woman prepared to do the high hairline in the name of authenticity? May St. Dymphner bless them both!

Catherine Wetton

The Ian Dickson Memorial Game

News was received in September, shortly before Blore Heath, that former re-enactor, Ian Dickson, 27, had passed away. For many former Stafford Household members this came as very sad news. Ian was a member of the Stafford household from the 1995 Season up until the group split. Renowned for his pink hose and frequent flirting, Ian was a good friend to many of the older members of Buckingham's Retinue, and former members of the Stafford Household.

Those of you that don't know Stafford, it has quite a large gaming community, including 'Magic' and 'Vampire'. Ian was heavily involved in gaming, becoming Storyteller for the Vampire games, and travelling all over the world. The weekend before he passed away he attended Gen. Con., the worldwide gaming tournament and trade fair. In respect of this James Wilson (our beloved Richard III) organised a memorial game for Ian, combining Ian's love of re-enacting with that of the Vampire Game.

The game was held in the evening of Sunday, 26 November 2000, at Littleworth Community Centre in Stafford. The brief of the story line was that a curse was broken in the signing of a

treaty between opposing vampire factions bringing Warwick and his retinue into the present. The only way to return Warwick and his retainers to the fifteenth century was to solve 3 clues and summon Richard III to vanquish Warwick. The re-enactors would have won too if allowed. Now I know that we've done that in battles in the past, but for once we had to do as we were told!

A good time was had by all, and it was lovely to see some of Ian's family there. Even though we had virtually no idea what we were doing! Allan was superb as Warwick, and suitably menacing. Sam was fabulous as the snooty Lady Helena, Prioress of Chester, and watching Mark stalk the vampire prince of Coventry (who happened to be Tom Jewell, another re-enactor and friend) was highly entertaining. Special performances by Andy, who played probably the most powerful character there, and Darren as well were outstanding. As usual I ended up being a double agent (is someone trying to tell me something?). James was an excellent Richard III, complete with wig. We've seen him as Richard on numerous occasions, him being a great favourite at Middleham, but the vampires hadn't seen it before.

Catherine Wetton

Archers Wanted

We are looking to put together an archery block for the coming season. This is not only for the purpose of displays but also for battles. The bow was the most common weapon in the English army in the 15th century and all groups that re-enact the period are lacking in this area. So what we propose is to create our own special unit. This unit will be valiantly led by myself and will require some of the following in order to help it work. Such as numerous stakes, so we can set up a defensive position from which to attack our foes (hide behind). We shall also require extra blunts to be made, so we don't get bored two minutes into the battle! To make sure we all work together as a unit, a small amount of drilling will be required. So for those of us who also drill with bills it will mean more work, but not huge amounts. In order to look right, during field battles it would be preferable for any women to cross dress (though you don't have to do as well as Sam at Blore). This doesn't mean you'll need jacks or weapons, just a helmet and basic male kit. For sieges, women may fight as defenders without having to cross dress. For those men in the group who wouldn't want to do archery at the expense of a fight, most the archery is done at the beginning of battles. So those who want to fight with bills can leave their bows with someone, pick up bills and join the battle as a reinforcement unit. I would appreciate any help or comments, please let me know if you're ready to volunteer!

Thanks for you help, Darren

Events 2001

The 2000 season is done and we have to look to the future for new events. After extensive discussion and a new brochure (well done to all those who helped), we finally have something that looks like an events programme. This years negotiations have been much more difficult than usual, as EH have slashed their budget in half and will be putting on far fewer events in 2001. A lot of time has therefore been spent looking outside EH and we have found a few new sites. This appears likely to become an ever increasing pattern and we will be forced to continue to find new sites, as a time is likely to come in the next few years when there will be no EH events for anyone. The events programme has been set up with the intention of trying to achieve a good spread of events, at new sites and locations throughout the country. I think we have largely achieved a good result this time around.

Date	Site	Attendees	Event	Comments
14 th –16 th April, Easter	Porchester Castle	L&M	Jousting	Our attendance is by no means confirmed but the event is available if we want it. Discuss at the feast.
21 st -22 nd April	Dover Castle	Various Performers	Tudor firepower	Confirmed
4 th -7 th May, Bank Hol.	Deal Castle	Buck's Retinue	Tudor Murder Mystery	Confirmed
26 th -27 th May, Bank Hol.	Battle Abbey	Everyone	Battle	Confirmed
9 th -10 th June	Wrest Park	L&M	Jousting	Confirmed
30 th June – 1 st July	Tutbury Castle	Buck's Retinue	Castle Garrison/Siege	To be confirmed
7 th -8 th July or 14 th -15 th July	Tewkesbury	Usual high quality.	Battle	Confirmed apart from the date.
21 st -22 nd July	Barley Hall	Buck's Retinue	Role Play	To be confirmed although highly likely.
4 th -5 th August	Old Sarum	L&M	Siege to support Jousting	Confirmed
11 th -12 th August	Kirby Hall	Usual	History in Action	Confirmed
18 th -19 th August	Castle Rising	Buck's Retinue plus guests	Siege	To be confirmed but a good deal of interest, will be a major event for us.
25 th -27 th August, Bank Hol.	Warwick	L&M	Games and Tournament	Confirmed
22 nd -23 rd September	Blore Heath	Various	Battle	Not confirmed but very popular in 2000.
October	Agincourt	?	Battle	Watch this space!

Tamworth castle may still be plugged in, however we don't have a date at this stage. The events are better spread this year although August is full and can be expected to remain so every year! Because of the unknown situation with regard to EH we are going to have to start planning events much further out. There is already one confirmed for 2002 and another potential event for 2003 that is being dicussed. It is the intention to have the majority of 2002 events confirmed by the middle of this year. Any questions then please call on the usual number.

Best Regards, Chris